DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILLIAM CALDWELL, COMMANDER, NATO TRAINING MISSION-AFGHANISTAN AND COMBINE SECURITY TRANSITION COMMAND-AFGHANISTAN SUBJECT: UPDATE ON AFGHAN SECURITY FORCES TIME: 8:35 A.M. EDT DATE: MONDAY, AUGUST 23, 2010

(Note: Please refer to www.dod.mil for more information.)

LIEUTENANT JENNIFER CRAGG (Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs): I'd like to welcome you all to the Department of Defense's Bloggers Roundtable for Monday, August 23rd, 2010. My name is Lieutenant Jennifer Cragg with the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, and I'm going to be moderating this roundtable today.

A note to everyone on the call: please remember to clearly state your name and organization prior to asking your questions. Also, keep your questions to one each. We have a sizable group on the call today, I want to make sure that everybody gets a chance to ask a question. This roundtable is expected to go for about 40 minutes, so if we can, we will go around. If there is any other follow-on questions that you didn't get to ask, please send them to me and I'll forward them to NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan. And also, please don't place your phone on hold. We will hear your hold music, and it will disrupt our conversation.

So with that, let's pass it over to our guest today. He is Lieutenant General William B. Caldwell. He's commander, NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan, and commanding general, Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan.

Sir, the floor is yours if you'd like to start with an opening statement, and then we'll go into questions. Please go ahead, sir.

GEN. CALDWELL: Okay, great. Thanks, Jenny. I appreciate it.

And to everybody else, good morning. It's great to be talking to you all again. I have not done that -- done this for a while, and as you all know, four years ago when I was serving in Iraq as the spokesman for the Multi-National Force-Iraq there, I remember somebody coming up to me and asking one time, hey, why don't we set up and do a bloggers roundtable?

And, you know, back then my question was, what's a blogger? And, you know, since that time, I truly have learned and gained a great appreciation for the power and the importance of blogs and social media. And for several of you on the line, I know in fact you're aware of what we did when I was the commander in my last three-star command out at Fort Leavenworth, where we made tremendous strides in, you know, trying to help our Army, our U.S. Army embrace this new form of media.

And since I've taken command here at the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan, I've tried to stress the importance that each and every one of you play, and make sure that my folks are readily available and get out and talk on a routine basis to share what each of them are doing, so that people have a better understanding and appreciation just what we are doing in this command.

We are a multinational organization that employs trainers and advisers. You know, our mission is to develop the two security ministries -- that's the Ministry of Interior and Defense. At the same time, we have police, army, air forces, logistical systems, medical systems and all the institutions that train and educate them all.

Our mission is critical to ISAF's overall strategy of transition of security to the Afghan government. In many ways, you can say that the Afghan National Security Force is transition. Our efforts to build and strengthen the Afghan National Security Force is providing the professional force that is self-reliant and has the ability to generate and sustain their forces with the mission to serve and protect the people of Afghanistan.

To understand the measured progress we've made, you have to really stop and take a look back. From 2002 to November 2009, when we activated this command, the development of the Afghan National Security Force really was hampered by a lack of resources leading to understandably slow, halting and uncoordinated progress.

The focus was on getting as many soldiers and police into operations as fast as possible. There was little time really dedicated to building and developing the Afghan National Security Forc as an enduring force. Meanwhile, key inputs that addressed the professionalism and quality of the force, such as leader development, losses from attrition and literacy of soldiers and police were overlooked.

The development of the Afghan National Security Force was inconsistent. From November, 20 -- or really from the beginning of 2002 to November 2009, the average raw growth was about 15,000 personnel in the Afghan National Army, or the ANA, and about 12,000 in the Afghan National Police, or in the ANP, for a total of about 27,000 in the Afghan National Security Force. These numbers were below the requirement to meet both the ANA and the ANP strength goals.

Today, we have reversed that trend. In the past nine months alone, the growth in the army and police has more than doubled the average of any previous year, with this year so far being at 58,000. The growth of the Afghan National Security Force in the first half of 2010 is

in fact larger than at any other year in its history. The growth has been very dynamic; both the ANA and the ANP have in fact exceeded their 2010 growth goals about three months ahead of schedule, whereas had you asked us nine months ago if that were possible, I think all of us would've agreed that we would've been severely challenged to have made that happen.

Our greatest challenge today is to build in a self-sustaining Afghan National Security Force with professionalism amongst its ranks. Professionalism truly is the key ingredient to an enduring force that can serve and protect its people.

The three elements that are required to build this professional force that we're focused on are leader development, literacy and addressing losses through attrition.

The first and probably most important element to professionalize the Afghan national security force is leader development. Our efforts to (create ?) professional officers and noncommissioned officers in the army and police are focused on quality training, developing experience and providing an appropriate education -- all dedicated to creating an ethos of service and loyalty. It is only when the leaders embrace a culture of service to others that the Afghan national security force will truly be a professional force.

The second element, we say, is literacy -- literacy of soldiers and policemen. It's an essential enabler to a professional force. When you stop and consider the fact that the average literacy rate for an entry-level soldier and policeman in Afghanistan is about 14 (percent) to 18 percent across the entire force, literacy becomes a major challenge in training, education and even performance of the basic skills required by any professional force.

This skill addresses the three most pressing challenges to professionalization. Literacy provides us the ability to enforce accountability. It allows for professional military education, particularly specialized skills that are taught in branch schools and continued education. And it combats corruption within the Afghan national security force. So unless we take on and deal with literacy, we're going to be extremely challenged with accountability, branch competency and working anti-corruption within the force itself.

Through the creation of -- mandatory now -- what used to be optional but is now mandatory literacy courses, in the past nine months, we have been supporting the professionalization of this security force, and have educated many students. But we recognize that it will take time and sustained effort to educate an entire generation of Afghans to a level necessary to create a -- professional leaders and allow for the specialization within the force.

The final element, and the really true endemic enemy of professionalization, are losses from attrition. These losses include desertions, deaths and low retention. They pose the greatest threat to both quantity and, for us, quality of the security force.

For example, based on the current attrition rates, for us to grow with our Afghan counterpart, the Afghan national security force, the additional 56,000 needed to meet their 2000 -- 31 October 2011 goal of 305,000, we together will need to recruit and train 141,000 soldiers and police. If I can put that into some context for you, in order to meet the 2011 goal, we will need to recruit and train, in the next 15 months, approximately the same number as the total strength of the Afghan National Army today.

We have made significant progress this year in laying the foundation to professionalize the Afghan national security force. We are realistic about the challenges ahead, but we are also optimistic about what we can, together, do with our Afghan counterparts to be in the process of transition as the Afghan national security forces take the lead to protect and serve its people.

And with that, I'll be glad to take whatever questions you have.

Over to you, Jenny (sp).

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir, so much.

Andrew Lubin, you were first. Please go ahead.

Q Absolutely. General, Andrew Lubin. Good to talk to you again, sir.

GEN. CALDWELL: Hi, Andy.

Q Good, thanks.

General, the news back here is the New York City community center/mosque, with both sides claiming the -- that they're correct. Is there any pushback as far as recruiting in Afghanistan, as far as America being pro-Muslim, anti-Muslim, or any -- anything like -- along those lines?

GEN. CALDWELL: Andy, we haven't seen anything whatsoever -- any impact whatsoever on that, really, nor has there been any discussion even in our interactions that we do every single day in the two ministries of Interior and Defense.

Over.

Q Great. Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Andrew. Thank you, sir.

J.D. Leipold, you are next. Please go ahead.

Q Hi, General. Good morning. I'm with the Army News Service. Just a quick question here for you. How do -- how do you address literacy? What kind of things are you doing for the soldiers?

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, you know, that's a great question. And you know, last November, when we stood up this command and a member from back in the United States asked us about literacy in the force, my first reaction was, well, we don't do literacy training. What we do is, we train soldiers and we train policemen to go out and serve their country.

And what I quickly recognized, after being on the ground at about 60 to 90 days, is that unless we don't take on literacy, we truly will never professionalize this force.

Where it became very stark notice to me is when we're out on a range and you recognize that the young soldiers can't even read the serial number on their weapon. So you ask yourself: Well, how can we establish accountability for the -- you know, all the money that the American taxpayers put in over here, into this country, if they can't account for their equipment properly? If they're issued a sleeping bag and other types of military gear and they're given a piece of paper that shows what they've been issued, how are they able to read that and understand the very basic stuff about what they're responsible for and are supposed to maintain accountability of? They're absolutely totally dependent on somebody else, who can then manipulate the system and therefore, you know, corruption can start to set in place.

We were very, very proud, and we are today, of the fact that started long before us -- pushing to do electronic funds transfer, where we were after a systemic corruption that was existing when so much money was coming from the very top all the way down, and cash was being handed out in monthly payments. So they came up with a system to get at that corruption, and that was electronic funds transfer -- a brilliant idea that about 87 percent of the force today actually has EFT in existence.

But as we found with the pay team, as late as last week, that was operating up north, doing our -- you know, our checking on pay and how is it going to make sure there's no issues out there -- I mean, there are -- their trying to take them on, you know, each time we find them -- we had 90 soldiers out of about 100 that were saying they had not been paid -- in fact, had not been paid for several months. And the pay team was very concerned about it.

But what they found is, they dug into it: Those approximately 90 soldiers -- who are all absolutely illiterate and could not read and understand their bank statements, nor did they know how to access or use their teller machines -- in fact, each of them had been paid. They had a lot of money in their accounts, several months' worth of pay and just did not know how to get at it. So great idea to get at this systemic corruption that was out there, but now we've realized that there's a much lower-level level of corruption that could creep in unless we take on and, again, just give them the basic skill sets.

We're not talking about making them high school graduates. We're talking about giving them anywhere from between a first grade-level education to about a third grade-level education. And for many back in America, that's really hard to comprehend. And I understand that, and it

was for me, too, until I've seen it time and time and time again here in this country; to realize that, my goodness, we -- for us to professionalize this force to ensure that it's going to be enduring and self-sustaining, and set the conditions for transition, we're going to have to take on and make literacy -- which today has about 27,000 police and army in mandatory programs -- growing to 50,000 by this December, and to 100,000 by next June.

So literally, by next June, this time next year, we will have 100,000 men and women in the police and army in continuous education programs, working to improve their literacy levels to, hopefully, about the third-grade level.

Over.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Thank you, J.D.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Noah, you are next. Please go ahead. (Pause.) Noah?

Q Oh, yeah, sure.

Hey, General. How are you? Hey, there's been a lot of talk about drug use in the -- in both the army and within the police. Are you doing anything -- first of all, can you give us sort of drug-use numbers? And secondly, what are you doing on drug problem, or is it even a problem?

GEN. CALDWELL: You know -- you know, Noah, dang good to hear you again. No, you're exactly right, we are very concerned about that ourselves, especially as we're trying to professionalize this force. And again, a lot of what we do when we're partnering out there with these police and army forces is to help them with behavior modification, to show them that there are certain things that a professional force will and will not do. And although it may have been something that occurred before, as we take on and work leader development as a key element of ours, you know, we want to teach them that that's something that's unacceptable in a professional army and a professional police force.

We just recently completed a personal assets inventory -- a PAI -- of the entire police force, that we started about the January time frame. We've got 95 percent of our data in.

And out of that, what we did, we went out and did, you know, biometrics on every single policeman out there. We did 100 percent drug testing while we were at it, and then came back and collected all this data. And what we found was, it was not as prevalent as we thought it would be across the entire force. It came out to be about 9 percent is the average. But I need to clarify that, because there are some areas where it's much higher than that and other areas where it's much lower. And again, I need to stress that it's a one-time, you know, testing that

we did that day that we were doing the PAI on them, when they came into and were -- you know, received a full biometrics assessment done.

So we think we've got pretty good data. We believe we've got about the right feel for what it is. We're continuing to work hard at getting at it. We work, especially in the training base, in the institutional training base, to instill upon them that the use of drugs is not, you know, compatible with military or police service. And then of course once they get out to the fielded force, looking for the OMLeTs, the POMLeTs, the partnered units, we continue to reinforce that and work with our counterparts to help them with that. Over.

Q And -- sorry, just a quick follow-up. So can someone be on drugs and still be -- you know, can someone smoke hash, smoke opium, and still be a cop or a soldier in Afghanistan? Or is that grounds for dismissal?

GEN. CALDWELL: What the focus is on right now is behavior modification. And so when found, when identified, you know, to take the corrective action, and if necessary, you know, even -- the minister of interior set up a hospital for the heavy drug users where they can go and get some treatment. And that's very, very new in the last three to four months that's been set up here.

And there are people in the treatment program as we speak.

But the emphasis -- not quite like you perhaps would see in our military, where we almost have a zero tolerance for it. Over here, we recognize that it's something that has been culturally much more acceptable than it would be in our society back in the United States; to be aware of that. But at the same time, to professionalize this force, to ensure that it's going to be enduringly self-sustaining, we all, the coalition force here, we all recognize that that's unacceptable behavior, and in fact continue to work with them so that we can get that corrected and help them correct it.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir.

Thank you, Noah.

Jeff (sp), please go ahead.

Q How you doing, sir. Jeff Csuzubowitz (ph) with Stars and Stripes. Turning to the Afghan local police program, I'm kind of writing an update on that, and I was just wondering, you know, how that's going to lay out in relation to ANP, Afghan uniformed police units on the ground. You know, will the Afghan local police program involve those armed villagers answering, you know, to an ANP commander? And is there any concerns about them kind of being a force outside the kind of conventional, you know, police realm?

GEN. CALDWELL: No, that's a great question. And, as you know, the president of Afghanistan personally signed off on a decree here about a week or so ago to go ahead and start allowing the Ministry of Interior

to work the implementation procedures that will allow this process to take place.

Here, I'll set a -- say a couple things about ALP for you. One is, it's not going to change the face of the security nationally here, and I think that's important for folks to understand. But it could have a tremendous impact locally, which is a clear distinction.

You know, the next thing I'd say, it's -- it has the potential also to thicken the security forces that are operating out there in some areas where this kind of force would, in fact, take place.

They will be responsible to national authorities. Their pay will come through the national system, through the Ministry of Interior, and their chain of command is through the Ministry of Interior down to what is being called the deputy chief within the district, who will have the command and control, the guidance and direction over any Afghan local police elements that in fact are formed. They are there for defensive purposes only. They're going to be restricted to only operate in the areas in which they're locally formed from that general area. They will not conduct offensive operations. They have no law enforcement authorities.

And so it's really when there are people within Afghanistan who want to provide greater security for their village and their tribal area that will band together, be supported and recognized by the government, paid for by the government of Afghanistan, who will operate just there to provide local security.

So I think the president who -- the president of Afghanistan, who has spent a tremendous amount of time -- and this has been an ongoing process for about two months -- in the development of the decree that he signed -- that was the major concern, is that there was not the opportunity for some kind of, you know, rogue element of form out of this, so therefore all the controls that have been placed upon it and their need for it to remain under national control, if that helps.

Over.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Jeff.

Anand, please go ahead.

Q This is Anand, from Registan. Could you provide a breakdown of trainers pledged by country and specialization, including those countries that are not part of NTM-A but contribute to ANSF training through bilateral arrangements? If this is outside your lane, could you request MOI and MOD to answer this question? sa

GEN. CALDWELL: Yeah -- no, that's exactly -- we are the NATO Training Mission. We do have many different countries engaged with and involved with our effort with trainers, and we'll be glad to provide that data to you. We do break it down by country, nationality, both within NATO and outside of NATO. So we -- rather than go through the

whole list, we'll be glad to provide you some of that data, if that's what you'd like to see. And we can set that up and pass it through Jenny back to you, so in case somebody else would want it, too.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir.

Gail, please go ahead.

Q Good morning, General. I'm Gail Harris, with the Foreign Policy Association, and my question concerns a -- the attrition issue. Yesterday, The New York Times did an article saying that 646 Afghan police were killed in 2009, compared with 412 foreign coalition troops and 282 Afghan Army personnel. And then this year, they say that police are being killed by the Taliban at a rate of about four to six a day. I was wondering if you could elaborate a bit more about the attrition issue.

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, Gail, it is a concern that we watch very closely. And obviously, attrition is associated with about three things, and you're right, it's those that are killed, those that decide to leave and desert, and those who are no longer able to serve, perhaps because of wounds received or something like that, or their term of service is up and they depart.

And so it does have a real impact on us long-term, because the higher the attrition then that means the greater number, not only as we try to grow this force, we now have to recruit, train and assign beyond what we were going to do, just to grow the force. So it's something we look at closely.

We do have some statistics on the number that are -- that have been killed out there within the Afghan security forces. We can provide that to you. We do know that, generally, if you -- if you take the police and the army together, their number of killed, you know, it's generally about two to 2-1/2 times greater than that of the coalition forces. So the -- they're out there, they're engaged.

We know the police, which are operating day to day right there amongst the people, are, of course, at -- (of ?) the greatest threat. Those are the ones that, you know, you're most concerned about, because they're not operating in large unit formations, but they're out there, you know, to protect and serve the people.

And so you have the local police, then you have your Afghan National Civil Order Police, which are an (organized ?) unit, which are more heavily equipped and do operate around the country. So there's different kind of police out there.

And, of course, then you have your key -- your third key one is border police. This year alone within the Afghan National Army there's been a -- you know, approximately about 274 that we're tracking as of about today that have been killed in the army, and about 461 within the

police force. So the number of police deaths are, in fact, greater than the number of Afghan National Army deaths, as you can see by those statistics there. So it is true.

And we're working hard. And we're -- you know, we're looking at the training and equipping and whether or not there's something we should do to modify how, in fact, we continue to train local police here in the future and whether or not they need to be -- provide more survival-type skills and perhaps even some different type of equipment that we -- than we have previously issued in the past to them, if that helps.

Q It helps a lot, sir. And I do know the media tends to focus on -- it bleeds, it leads.

The FB -- according to FBI statistics in the United States, the last year that I've got good numbers, over 14,000 people were killed by guns. So just -- I just mention that as a contrast and how sometimes the media focus on the negative statistics without putting things into context.

Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir.

Thank you, Gail.??

Ali, you were next. Please go ahead.

Q Hello. Hi, General. This is Ali Jestee (ph) from the daily -- (inaudible) -- Karachi, Pakistan. This one -- (inaudible) -- percent of Afghan soldiers could actually work -- to a recent survey -- actually could work unsupervised, and rest are totally reliant on the NATO troops and twice -- and suffered twice as much casualty on the battle in Laghman that 300 Afghan soldiers were ambushed by Talibans. What are you actually doing to make them work unsupervised? But is their work on a criminal justice system?

And just finally, is the Pakistani army or the police working to train Afghans with you guys? Thank you.

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, if I can help a little, the -- currently there are no Pakistan military trainers or police trainers that are working inside of our organization with (inside/insight ?) of Afghanistan. They have -- the Pakistan government has made some offers to the government of Afghanistan on a bilateral basis, you know, from country to country, to do some training inside of Pakistan for both the Afghan National Army and the police. But as I understand, that's been very, very minimal numbers that they've taken up and have sent over there for training at this time.

And then -- if that answers the first part of the question.

Q Yes, sir. Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir.

Q It does, sir.

LT. CRAGG: Sir, should I go on to the next caller?

Q But, excuse me, just my -- the question was -- the ones -- so this could actually work unsupervised. Is there a way that you can, you know, make them work unsupervised in a -- (inaudible)? Thank you.

GEN. CALDWELL: Jenny, I'm just having a little problem with the connectivity. Can you help me there, please?

LT. CRAGG: He's asking about supervision, if they can work unsupervised.

Q Yes.

LT. CRAGG: That was the general gist of his question.

Ali, after the General asks (sic) your question, we're going to have to go on to the next caller so we can make time for everyone else.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Sir, that was the gist of his question.

GEN. CALDWELL: Yeah and -- what occurs on a daily basis is more and more partnering is starting to take place where coalition forces, under the ISAF Joint Command -- under IJC, as they call it -- are out with the fielded forces -- both the Afghan national security forces, both the police and the army -- and they do continually do joint assessments to assess the capability of the Afghan forces to operate independently from coalition forces.

Right now -- again, this is still a very young army and police force. Partnering is really just fully coming on line at this point, too. And again, we have not yet built into the army and police the capability for them to be truly independent.

The -- all the support structure is still going to be built here over the next 15 months. You know, the build-out of the army and the build-out of the police doesn't finish until October 31st, 2011. So currently, today, within the army and the police, you really don't have any logistics units, you don't have any real mobile medical units, you don't have -- really very, very few transportation units. We're just starting to develop intelligence capabilities, intelligence units for the two of them.

So all those kind of capabilities that you would need to truly operate independently have not yet been built and fielded into the force structure. Again, our focus up until now has been a very infantry-centric force and get as many, you know, ground units out there that could in fact be engaged in a part of the -- you know, fighting the

insurgency with the coalition forces providing all their support behind them.

So even though you may find some units today that are -- have leadership that's maturing well, and is able to take and do the planning, the coordinaton and execution of missions, they still are dependent on coalition forces until we finish really the complete buildout of the army of the police force. Over.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Ali.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: James, please go ahead.

Q I'm sorry. My turn? James Meek?

LT. CRAGG: Yes, sir. Please go ahead.

Q Fantastic.

Hey, General, thanks for joining us. This is James Meek for The New York Daily News. I just got back about a week ago from Afghanistan. And I was last three five years ago when I was with Task Force Devil, and I had the pleasure of meeting you at FOB Salerno.

A lot has changed since I was there last. And I want to make sure I heard you correctly. If I understood what you were saying, the Afghans have now got a force that's about 140 (thousand), 150,000, and you're saying that in the next 15 months they basically have to double that and retain that number. They have to have twice as many troops 15 months from now as they have today.

First of all, is that correct? Did I hear you right?

GEN. CALDWELL: Yeah. I'll give you -- today, the overall size of the Afghan security force is about 243,000. The army today is about 134,000. And by October 31st of next year, it's going to grow to 171.6 thousand. So that delta there of about 37-and-a-half thousand that it's got to grow is not really indicative of what needs to be done.

What needs to be done in order to make that 37,000 grow is to take in the attrition factors that currently exist, we're going to have to recruit, train and assign 86,000 more people to the army in order to make that growth of 37.6 thousand.

And then within the police force, it's at about 115,000 today. By next October or 31 October next year, it's going to grow to 134,000. So, again, that's a delta of about 19,000. But to make that growth of 19,000, we're going to have to recruit, train and assign almost 56,000 in the police force. And, again, that's based on attrition factors.

So if that helps you there on what the difference is -- so in order to grow about 57,000 people in the security force over the next 15

months, we're going to have to recruit, train and assign about 142,000, which is larger than the army that exists today. Over.

Q Okay. Well, that's Mathis. And I don't think anybody --

LT. CRAGG: Okay, Jane. Thank you, Jane. I'm sorry, Jane. (Inaudible) -- other callers. Thank you, Jane.

If there's other callers on the line, we're going to --

Q Hello?

LT. CRAGG: -- end the roundtable in about three minutes to make time for the general's conversation with the Pentagon press corps.

Grim, please go ahead with your question.

Q Yes. Thank you, General. This is Grim of Blackfive.net. My question's about the professional education of officers, particularly training in doctrine.

What are you training them to understand about the enemy they face, especially the internal divisions of the coalition facing us, and the desired end state of the conflict? If you train an officer, what does he understand about who his enemy is, how they're divided, and how we want this conflict to end?

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, right now today, the focus that we have in the training programs is on developing the operated COIN environment, the counterinsurgency environment, you know, because, you know, that will change with time. But right now that's the challenge they have within this country.

So in their training programs at the basic, entry level, it's very COIN-centric. Now, when you move to the mid-grade level -- and, again, we don't have large numbers going through it yet, but we do have a mid-grade-level command staff college here that we have put into existence. That's much longer and obviously far more comprehensive, and looks beyond the days when we anticipate that they would be able to handle the insurgency that exists here down to a low level, and would in fact reorient and be able to use their forces in more holistic manner.

You know, one thing I'll tell you which has really struck me that I have been very, very impressed with is just how they -- like, their Afghan air force that we have today, how they've taken and used that for humanitarian assistance missions here within Afghanistan just in the short time period I've been here from avalanches up in the north on passes where they -- you know, used it to move people, to flooding that's occurred down in the south and out in the east; again, going out and supporting the people to today where they have four Mi-17s deployed forward into Pakistan on day 14 providing humanitarian assistance to the Pakistan people.

So a lot of these concepts about using military force to serve and protect the people they grasp rather quickly and understand how important that is. But at the same time, our focus on training is today COIN-centric in the time that we have available when they're doing the initial entry into the field of force. Over.

Q Thank you, General.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Grim. And thank you, sir.

I know that Mike, Jennifer and Paul just left the call.

He had to leave for a meeting. We won't get a chance to go around to you because Lieutenant General Caldwell has to attend a Pentagon press corps briefing. So at this time, I'm going to turn it back over to Lieutenant General Caldwell for any closing remarks, and we'll wrap up today's roundtable. Please go ahead, sir.

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, Jenny, what I would tell everybody on here, if you do have follow-up questions you'd like to have us take, we'll be more than glad to do it. If you'll pass them to Jenny, she'll funnel them to us, and that way, we can make sure that anybody who had a question -- you know, everybody receives the same information that's on this call.

Lieutenant Colonel Shawn Stroud who I served with together in -- when I was in Iraq on my last tour there and then again out at Fort Leavenworth when I was a commander out there has just come on board here about a week and a half ago. He's their new director of communications. And so many of you will know him already. He's back in the game, so to speak, assisted in this effort, and part of the reason, therefore, we're out now starting to try to talk more about what we're doing.

But I do want to thank each and every one of you for this opportunity to share with you really the progress that the Afghan National Security Force have made since the activation of NATO Training Missing-Afghanistan last November. We literally are just nine months and two days into existence at this point. And it is a tough and a very complex mission.

But we truly believe that if we remain -- you know, we -- as we came up a motto with our Afghan counterparts, we call it "shohna ba shohna," which is "shoulder to shoulder" with our Afghan counterparts. You know, if we maintain that close connection with each other, we'll be able to continue moving forward, achieving, you know, progress which is so critical and important at this point to demonstrate to the international community that a difference can be made here, and that in fact we are moving forward.

So, anyway, thank you all very much. You all have the very important constituent that is engaged with and reads what each and every one of you writes so we -- it is in our interest to respond to your questions.

We have tons and tons of data if you specifically want to dive into a particular area. We did provide two slides` that hopefully you all have that we just put together in about the last 48 hours, and we were trying to figure out how could we in two slides capture some of the most salient things that might help set the stage to understand kind of where we were, where we are today, and kind of what do we see about where we're going. And if you didn't get those, Jenny has those, and can make sure we get those out to you. Over to you, Jenny.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you so much, sir. And as a reminder, I did send out those Powerpoint slides about 15, 20 minutes prior to the roundtable. So if you need me to send them again, I'd be happy to. Everyone will get a transcript from today's call. We will also post it to DODLive.mil. Again, you've been listening to Lieutenant General William Caldwell. He's commander, NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan and commanding general, Combined Security Transition Command- Afghanistan.

Thank you so much, for everyone who called in. And I'm sorry for the people we didn't get around to. Please submit your questions, and I will forward them to NTM-Alpha.

Thank you so much, sir. Thank you again, for everyone. And please disconnect at any time. Thank you.

Q Hey, thanks, General. Good to hear from you.

END.